

suggestion which is highly productive when it operates in a crowd, because it draws out latent power, concentrates what would otherwise be scattered, verifies and corrects what has been taken up, eliminates error, and constructs by combination.

Hence the gain from the collective operation is fully accounted for, and the theories of *Volkerpsychologie* are to be rejected as superfluous. Out of the process which has been described have come the folkways during the whole history of civilization.

The phenomena of suggestion and suggestibility demand some attention because the members of a group are continually affecting each other by them, and great mass phenomena very often are to be explained by them.

24. Suggestion; suggestibility. What has been called the psychology of crowds consists of certain phenomena of suggestion.

A number of persons assembled together, especially if they are enthused by the same sentiment or stimulated by the same interest, transmit impulses to each other with the result that all the impulses are increased in a very high ratio. In other words, it is an undisputed fact that all mental states and emotions are greatly increased in force by transmission from man to man, especially if they are attended by a sense of the concurrence and cooperation of a great number who have a common sentiment or interest. "The element of psychic coercion to which our thought process is subject is the characteristic of the operations which we call suggestive."¹ What we have done or heard occupies our minds so that we cannot turn from it to something else. The consensus of a number promises triumph for the impulse, whatever it is. *Ca ira*. There is a thrill of enthusiasm

in the sense of moving with a great number. There
is no deliberation or reason. Therefore a crowd may do
things which are either better or worse than what individuals in it
would do. Cases of lynching show how a crowd can do things
which it is extremely improbable that the individuals would
do or consent to, if they were taken separately. The crowd has
no greater guarantee of wisdom and virtue than an individual
would have. In fact, the participants in a crowd almost always
throw away

¹ Stoll, *Suggestion und Hypnotismus*^ 702.